

## McCollum Food Security Speech

Feb. 24 – Partnership to Cut Hunger and Poverty in Africa

Good morning.

It's good to be with you early this morning - "up with the cows" as they say in Minnesota.

I'd like to thank the Partnership to Cut Hunger and Poverty in Africa for inviting me to participate in today's panel.

And a special thanks to Peter McPherson and Julie Howard.

Peter and Julie are using their many talents to raise awareness about global agriculture and food security in Congress –  
we need you to keep it up!

You're looking at a legislator from the Heartland of America who cares about agriculture in rural African villages.

That's because I represent a big city in a farm state.

In Minnesota, everybody is one generation – maybe two –  
from the farm.

I didn't grow up on the farm, but in South St. Paul I could hear – and smell - the pigs and cows from the huge stockyards just down the road.

America built its cities with the riches of our soils and the hard work of our farmers and ranchers.

That story is true for many countries around the world.

And by working together, all of us can make that Africa's story too.

I'm also proud to represent the University of Minnesota's school of agriculture.

Our land-grant university has a tradition of leadership in agriculture dating back to the Green Revolution.

Norman Borlaug received his education at our university,

And then went on to become the leader of an international movement that ended famines and saved millions of lives.

From Central America to Asia, the results were astounding.

For example, in Pakistan:

- Cereal production doubled
- Absolute poverty fell by one-third.
- Life expectancy increased by 14 years.
- AND food availability increased even as the population grew by 80 million people.

The Green Revolution is one of the greatest achievements of the 20th century,  
and one of our proudest moments as a global community.

It taught us that agriculture was our best weapon against hunger and poverty,

and our best tool for building rural economies.  
But somehow, those lessons have been forgotten.  
Something happened when complacency set in.

Agriculture fell out of fashion in the development community.  
And year by year, investments in farmers declined.

- U.S. aid to African farmers fell from \$500 million in 1988 to less than \$100 million in 2006.
- The amount of development assistance going to agriculture from all global donors was cut by more than half between 1984 and 2004 – falling from \$8 billion to \$3.4 billion.

Agricultural investments declined but the need for food kept growing – especially in sub-Saharan Africa.

Today:

- Chronic hunger is killing 3.5 million mothers and children every year worldwide;
- Most African farms suffer drought season after season because only 10 percent have irrigation;
- And productivity is far too low - the average farm acre in Iowa produces 171 bushels of corn, while the average African farm acre produces just 21 bushels.

Malawi . . .

The under-achievement of African agriculture is a collective failure.  
Bi-lateral donors, multilateral donors, and developing countries themselves all failed to invest in agriculture.

The result was more poverty, more hunger and less economic growth for the developing world.  
And it left millions of poor families far too vulnerable to the price spikes and waves of food scarcity we saw last year.

Even before last year's crisis, nearly 1 billion people were already living on the edge of survival at \$1 per day.  
The global food crisis erased 7 years of progress for the world's poor in a matter of weeks.

It threw more than 100 million mothers and fathers and children back into poverty.

Why did this happen?

A generation after the great victories of Green Revolution,  
why are there more people going to bed hungry every single night?  
It doesn't have to be this way.

We know the solution to chronic hunger – its agricultural productivity and rural infrastructure.  
And we know how to increase productivity and build the needed infrastructure.  
But that's not where we're directing our resources.  
The problem isn't that we don't know how – it's that we're not even trying.

Today, the U.S. and other donors are running from one famine to the next,  
trying to solve chronic hunger with emergency aid.  
America has the largest food aid budget in the world – over \$1 billion every year.  
But without equally serious investments in agriculture development and rural infrastructure,  
we will never get ahead of the crisis.

We're not really helping people take control of their future and change their lives if we're not  
helping them prevent the next crisis.

America needs a smarter strategy to fight global hunger that cultivates more than dependence.

A smarter strategy is a comprehensive strategy that combines emergency food aid with  
longer-term investments in agriculture productivity.

It includes complementary investments in “productive safety nets” that stabilize and invest in the  
lives of poor families,  
and enables them to learn new, sustainable farming practices.  
Environmentally sustainable and socially sustainable.

A smarter approach recognizes that rural infrastructure is an essential part of the food security  
tool kit –  
Because higher productivity is useless if crops rot due to poor storage,  
or crops never make it to market because there are no roads.

We need a “partnership approach”, that connects our universities and international research  
institutes.  
They will help countries and NGOs adapt proven agriculture programs and techniques for 21st  
realities.

That means:

- Adapting to climate change and protecting natural resources;
- Embracing and supporting the leadership role women play in food production and rural communities;
- And it means creating new partnerships, not only with governments, but also with civil society groups, NGOs and the private sector.

The global food crisis removed any doubt that food security is an urgent need and must always be an international priority.

But it's not enough just to add food security to America's long list of global priorities. It must be placed at the center of our global development agenda.

Without a "food first" approach to development,  
none of our other international investments will take root.  
For example, basic education and global health are essential efforts.  
But if children can't grow strong without food  
Children can't learn if they're hungry.  
And if PEPFAR patients lack nutrition, the drugs won't work.

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With the economic crisis and war in the headlines,  
some might question whether this is the right time for new investments in agriculture and a bold new direction on global development.

This is the time for big ideas.

- America has a new President whose eyes are fixed on the wider world.
- Congress is taking up the challenge of modernizing U.S. foreign assistance.
- And a budget crunch is forcing new thinking from everyone in Washington on how to get more results with fewer dollars.

All of us are holding urgency in one hand and opportunity in the other.  
As long as 1 billion people go to bed hungry night after night, the world will never know security or peace.  
Action to ease hunger and prevent the next global food crisis can't wait.  
But by deciding to lead this fight,  
America can reclaim a proud global legacy and begin repairing my country's relationship with the world.

And how will we accomplish global change on this scale?

The same way every history-making change begins:  
one village at a time.

Thank you.